

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2010

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Berry
Gerald Carr
Sandra Edwards
Gary Hall
Irma Nelson
Dickie Walker
Anglyn Young

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Ann Moore

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Kara Aaron
Thomas Bradford
Larry Dickerson
Jim Hill

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erika Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Mary Cabaniss, Charlie Cain-Davis, Kandy Cayce, Mary Douglas, Rhonda Garmon, Ginny McWilliams, Mona Mason, Katy Morris, Judith Renick, Kena Sabb, Lou Talley, Jessie Thomas, Coral Virden, Donna Walker, Larry Wayland, Dwana Williams

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Mrs. Sharon Berry called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Motion was made by Ms. Irma Nelson to approve the agenda. Mr. Gerald Carr seconded the motion. ***Motion Passed.***

APPROVAL OF 09/10/10 MINUTES. Ms. Sandra Edwards requested that the draft of the September minutes be amended to reflect that she served on the Employee of the Year Subcommittee. Mr. Gerald Carr noted that he did not. Motion was made by Mr. Gary Hall to approve the minutes with that revision. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT

NATIONAL ISSUES:

Congress. Senate Bill 841, sponsored by Senator John Kerry, passed yesterday and became the **Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act of 2010**. It addresses the issue of “quiet” cars and also mandates that consumer groups be included in an on-going advisory function. The **Equal Access to 21st Century Communications Act, sponsored by Senator Mark Pryor passed October 8th**. Sen. Pryor also introduced SB3828 which amended the Equal Access Act to clearly indicate that it also applies to persons who are deaf-blind.

National Federation of the Blind – NFB is promoting the Blind Drivers’ Challenge on the Daytona Speedway January 29. A driver who is blind will utilize alternate technology to navigate the speedway.

National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) – DSB Director Katy Morris and Business and Technology Section Administrator Jim Pearson, attended the semi-annual NCSAB meeting in mid-November. The focus of the Employment part of the agenda was on self-employment. DSB is updating its consumer self-employment program based on a stronger business model, which may include some financial buy-in from the consumer. Plans are for DSB to reach out to colleges and universities to assist in the analysis of the consumer business plans. Field Services Administrator Mrs. Donna Walker will complete the self-employment guidelines and send this information out as a field policy which will be finalized and promulgated.

Advisory Commission on Accessible Instructional Materials in Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities - It was announced recently that this federal commission, set out in law previously, has now been established.

STATE ISSUES:

Governor Beebe recently issued Executive Order 10-17 that calls for a task force of business and government representatives to examine issues surrounding employment of persons with disabilities in Arkansas. The Task Force will return recommendations to the Governor by October 31, 2011 on how Arkansas public and private employers can improve their bottom line while improving the economic status of job applicants who are persons with disabilities through increased employment. Additionally, for organizations that provide supportive services to individuals with disabilities, the goal of the EO 10-17 activity is to shift the perspective to one of “Employment First”.

Access by Service Animals - Recently a guide dog user was barred from riding a van sponsored by the Arkansas State Employees Association (ASEA).

The directors of the various agencies and organizations serving individuals who are blind in Arkansas (collectively referred to as the “Blind Interest Group”) met with ASEA Director Danny James to address the problem. Mr. James assured the group that the action was absolutely not condoned by ASEA, and would be corrected. The rider and her guide dog would be most welcome on the van and letters of apology would be sent to the rider. Mr. James welcomed other input to ASEA by the group and said he would follow up with further information as the organization moved to encourage greater involvement by persons with disabilities.

Outreach to Minority Individuals - The RSA Region VI Advisory Council met recently in Dallas to discuss program issues facing Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico. DSB, along with the University of Arkansas and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services developed preliminary plans to recruit consumers from the Marshall Islands who are living in the Fayetteville area to enroll at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and become rehabilitation counselors. The region has a high number of Marshallese and recruiting counselors from this group which would naturally improve DSB’s capacity to respond to the needs of this population.

Voting Access - Problems in independent access to the voting process appear to center on insufficient training of poll workers on the operation of the voting machines. It was also suggested that sighted people might choose audio access to increase its use and give the poll workers more experience with the machines.

White Cane Safety Day at the State Capitol - Though DSB reset its dates for White Cane Safety Day to avoid conflict with higher profile events such as Race for the Cure, only a few passers-by stopped at the exhibit booths again this year. Next year DSB may move to a location with more foot traffic such as the River Market.

Aging Conference – DSB staff participated in the Annual Aging Conference October 27-28 and indicated it was particularly beneficial to them this year.

Jonesboro Office Relocation - The Craighead County DHS Office will relocate in the near future. A site has been identified, but nothing has been finalized at present. DCO Division Director Joni Jones has confirmed that DSB space will be comparable to that of other divisions for staff having similar functions.

Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS) – DSB is working closely with NFB/NEWSLINE to ensure DSB consumers can access Newsline services. The AIRS broadcast services, however, are unavailable where cable and satellite services don’t carry the AETN Kids channel. DSB is seeking assistance from Lions across the state to encourage local cable companies to carry these services.

DSB Consumer of the Year Process. The Lions of Arkansas were also of tremendous help to DSB in sponsoring the recognition events for the DSB Consumer of the Year process. In almost every case, the Lions were able to provide the venue for the local celebration of the area winner.

Disaster Preparedness – Administrative Assistant Judith Renick of the DSB Harrison office has led the DSB effort statewide to develop a template for disaster preparedness for persons with vision problems. DSB is working with the rest of the state disaster response network to prepare both the consumers and emergency response organizations to be ready. The Division of Volunteerism is developing an emergency preparedness initiative that parallels DSB and the joint efforts will fit into the overall state plan of the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM).

Workforce Agencies - DSB continues to be actively involved in the State Workforce Investment System as required by the Rehab Act. Assistant Director Cassondra Williams is out today because she is representing DSB at a strategic planning session of the Workforce Board. Part of that strategy is addressed by the expansion of the number of accessible kiosks for DSB consumers in Workforce Center locations. DSB is trying to change the culture of information access in Workforce Centers, so consumers feel comfortable going into most locations knowing they can access the internet, to search for jobs, the same as sighted individuals.

Coordination with Education – DSB will resume Jump Start at the School for the Blind this summer and planning meetings are upcoming. The division continues to coordinate services provided to students across the state with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired. Plans are to provide cross training with ESVI to ensure that the staffs are familiar with each other and knowledgeable about each agency's services.

Coordination with Non-profit Organizations – A new Center for Independent Living (CIL) in Jonesboro is in the planning stages. ARS and DSB will provide seed funding of \$25,000 with \$3,000 coming from DSB. Sources for Independent Living in Fayetteville will oversee the development. Sources Director Jim Mather already has local officials committed to the importance of an IL center in Jonesboro. After Jonesboro is established, the next goal is to establish a new CIL in Texarkana in about five years. The existing CILs are underfunded as it is, so care must be taken to phase in new centers slowly and avoid overextending resources. Avoiding overcommitment was a concern of RSA officials in signing off on the 2011 State Plan for Independent Living.

Outreach to Minorities - DSB's mechanism to provide vocational rehabilitation outreach to minority individuals with vision problems is called the "Faith-Based Bridge to

Employment”. The Division has “Bridge” contracts with three of the four CILs in the state.

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The CILs provide a venue for a meeting between VR Counselors and representatives of faith-based organizations so the counselor can encourage the organizations to partner with DSB in assisting potential consumers to become employed.

Consumer Advocacy - DSB continues to work with the Disability Policy Consortium in tracking legislation meaningful to the disability community.

National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas - NFBA held a very successful annual meeting October 16 with several DSB staff members in attendance. The agenda and the food were great.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) – The state plan requires DSB to demonstrate that it has the capacity to recruit, develop and retain qualified staff. This evidence is provided in the personnel sub-plan called the CSPD. As part of the implementation of the CSPD, DSB staff interact to exchange information with academic preparation programs such as the UALR Advisory Council regarding its curriculum and the progress of students; the State Office of Personnel Management regarding personnel standards; the Office of Budget on the adequate number of staff; and with other university programs across the nation offering stipends to prepare DSB staff for the certifications the state plan requires.

- The DSB personnel budget must show that the division has adequate staff, at equitable levels to recruit and retain the professionals required to carry out the state plan. To this end, the 2012 budget seeks to add the 10 temporary Stimulus Program job developers/coaches to the staff permanently. For equity and succession planning, DSB seeks to reclassify certain titles to higher grades to improve potential recruitment and the overall organizational structure.
- Regarding development activities, DSB has been sending staff to a significant amount of training recently. Patrick Calaway, a certified VR counselor out of Fayetteville, represented DSB at the National Employment Conference and made a presentation on the subject at the DSB Statewide Meeting. DSB Case Reviewer Ginny McWilliams (also certified in VR) attended the Quality Assurance Conference in Vancouver, Washington and also shared the feedback at Statewide. The entire staff and quite a few board members attended annual Statewide meeting November 1-4, and staff response was very positive.
- Plans are underway to hone the Braille skills of DSB Rehab Teachers. Braille has long been a required skill within the Rehabilitation Teachers' functional job description, but DSB plans to upgrade training and track credentials. DSB will work with Hadley or other proven training entity, and follow up periodically with retraining.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment – Each year the board develops the state plan within federal guidelines based on the results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment. Historically, the rate of consumer response to the Needs Assessment has been very low.

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However, since 2008, DSB focused this effort at the local office level and has seen a dramatic increase in consumer participation, from 72 in 2008 to 190 in 2009 to 356 in 2010. This great improvement in 2010 consumer participation of the planning process is clearly a result of the hard work and communication of the local office staff.

DSB Consumer Satisfaction Survey – Later on the agenda, Case Reviewer Ginny McWilliams will summarize the report on the results of the 2010 consumer participation in the evaluation process. The Survey always measures the satisfaction of the consumers whose cases had been closed in the previous federal fiscal year. For cases closed early in the fiscal year, the length of time between service and the satisfaction survey was sometimes long. To resolve this, next year DSB will look at surveying consumers shortly after cases are closed to improve the immediacy of consumer response and use the information for future planning and training.

Older Individuals Who Are Blind – Last year, 249 older blind individuals were successful in completing their rehabilitation plans in partnership with DSB Rehab Teachers. This year saw marked improvement, with 305 consumers reaching their planned level of independence.

Consumer of the Year – The DSB Consumer of the Year initiative is a celebration of the success of all vocational rehabilitation consumers, their employers and their DSB team members in each local office. Each Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor recognizes one individual locally as the Consumer of the Year for that caseload. A subcommittee of the DSB Board reviews the VR Counselor nominations based on board guidelines and selects the DSB Statewide Consumer of the Year. Recognizing the 13 area winners, their employers and the DSB staff involved has been a welcome celebration for everyone. Later today, the board will announce the State Consumer of the Year for 2010.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2009 CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY REPORT – DSB Case Reviewer Ginny McWilliams reported that the surveys are sent out the end of each federal fiscal year. The summary report is attached as a formal part of these minutes. Though the results are collected and tabulated in 2010, they measure the evaluation responses of consumers of record for FFY 2009.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) - The VR survey was mailed out in various media Free Matter for the Blind to every DSB VR consumer for 2009, and postage free return addressed envelopes were provided. The survey consisted of ten questions, and consumers were asked to indicate their satisfaction by choosing between **Strongly Agree**,

Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Of the 1,406 surveys mailed, 127 or 9.03% were returned as undeliverable.

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To date, 536 surveys have been received, representing a 38.12% response rate for 2009.

Overall, the satisfaction rate is 92.69% which is up 2.21% from 2008. The strongly agree was up and the strongly disagree was down.

Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) - The OIB survey was mailed in various media Free Matter for the Blind, to every DSB OIB consumer of record as of FFY 2009 and postage free addressed envelopes were provided. The survey consisted of nine questions and consumers were asked to indicate their satisfaction by choosing between **Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree**. Of the 669 surveys mailed, 50 or 15.06% were returned as undeliverable. To date, 332 have been received, representing a 47.49% response rate for 2009. Overall, the satisfaction rate is 93.77%. This is up 3.67% from 2008.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT - No representative was present.
No report was submitted.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) –
No representative was present. A report was submitted with the board packet and is attached as a formal part of these minutes.

CONSUMER INPUT – The American Council of the Blind (ACB) State Convention will be held the last weekend in April 2011 in Hot Springs at the Austin Hotel. The Business Partners at the local chapter level will meet next Saturday at 11 a.m., at the Dixie Café on Rodney Parham in Little Rock. The national ACB conference will be held in Reno, Nevada in July 2011.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING. The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, March 11, 2011 at 1 p.m., at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Rooms A and B.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF DSB STATE CONSUMER OF THE YEAR 2010 –
At the recommendation of the Board subcommittee, Chairman Sharon Berry announced that the DSB Consumer of the Year 2010 is **Tim Herold of Mountain Home**.

The meeting was adjourned to the DSB Reception honoring Mr. Herold and all the area winners.

Respectfully Submitted,

Irma Nelson

Secretary

Attachments:

[AILC Report Nov](#)

[AILC Report Dec](#)

[AILC Report Jan](#)

[OIB Survey Summary](#)

[VR Survey Summary](#)